



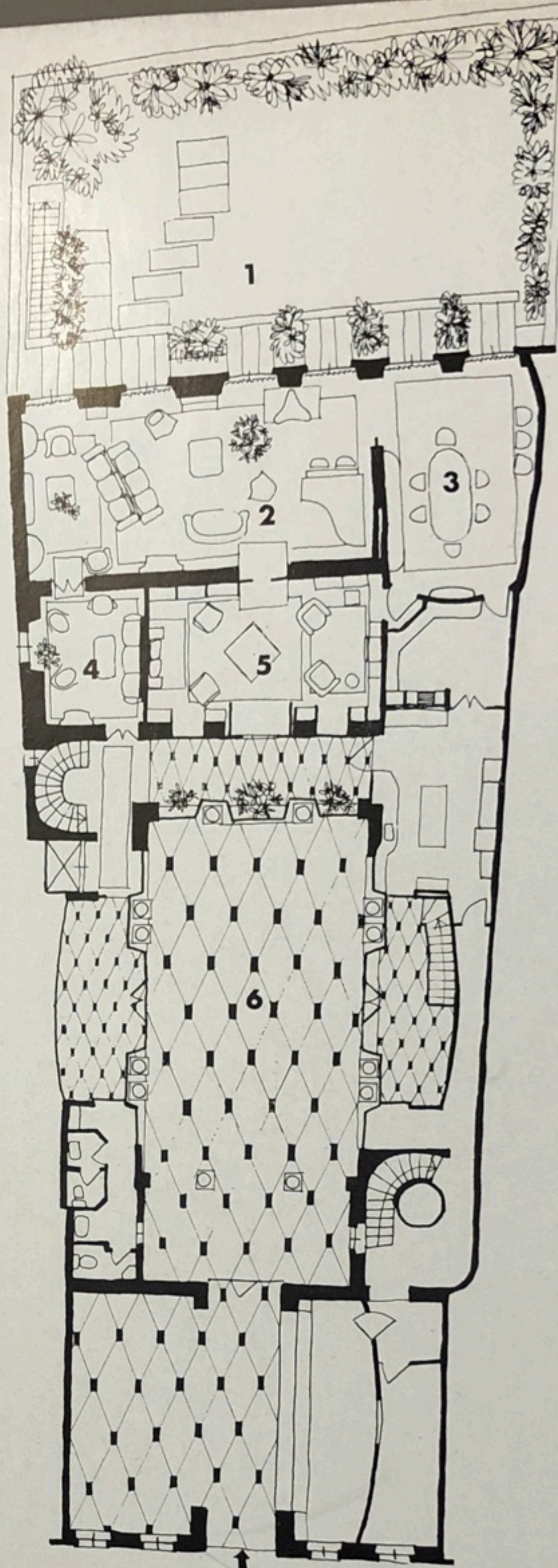
From Italy, with love and splendor

*Italy's master architects Belgioioso, Peressutti, and Rogers
restore an 18th century town house in Milan*

As far back as November, 1954, INTERIORS published a twenty-page portfolio of past and present work by the firm of Belgioioso, Peressutti, and Rogers, which included the highly acclaimed, startling, grotto-like, New York showroom for Olivetti, which had just opened. They were then, and still are, one of the most unusual and original post-war architectural firms in practice anywhere in the world. Their philosophy was succinctly stated—they would, and could, design anything “from a spoon to a city.” Even the small percentage of their work which we published testified that they did, indeed, make good such a claim. Projects included a colony for workers' children in Legnano; innumerable exhibitions; countless contributions to Triennale design; an Art Gallery addition to the Palace of Lions on Venice's Grand Canal; cinemas; christmas cards; apartments and offices, large and small; a memorial, outside Milan, to victims of the concentration camp at Malthausen. Among their more famous projects in the last decade has been Milan's first skyscraper, the controversial Torre Velasca, a commanding tower which houses offices on lower floors, apartments with projecting balconies on expanded upper floors. The tremendous scope, and diversity of their work, oddly enough, has protected their enormous talents with amorphous anonymity from all but the international architectural fraternity. Nothing is “typical,” and the two houses we present here—this town house in Milan, the villa on Lake Maggiore (pages 116-121)—can only serve to refresh readers' memories. Here they turned their craft to the renovation of a 250-year old town house on Via Bigli, the ancient center of town. They concentrated on restoring the characteristic columns of the court to their original state, and returned its architecture and interiors as much to the character of its epoch as feasible for contemporary living. The result, and the photographs of the majestic, serene, beautifully detailed interiors speak for themselves, is a small island of grace, which confirms the eternal validity of Italy's humanistic architectural arts. — B.W.N.

all photographs by carla de benedetti





- KEY TO PLAN
1. Garden
 2. Living room
 3. Dining room
 4. Study
 5. Library
 6. Court



The stairwell is a masterpiece of sculptured wood (see detail at landing left), with immaculately detailed treads and posts set against curves of layered wood. Curves of the stairwell offer sharp contrast to the ceiling detail (right), carefully planed and polished overlapping squares and rectangles of wood in a recurring pattern. Wood used throughout is walnut. Floor of the entrance hall is the same rose-colored Baveno granite set in a diamond pattern, with inlaid blocks of porphyry, used in exterior court (preceding pages.)



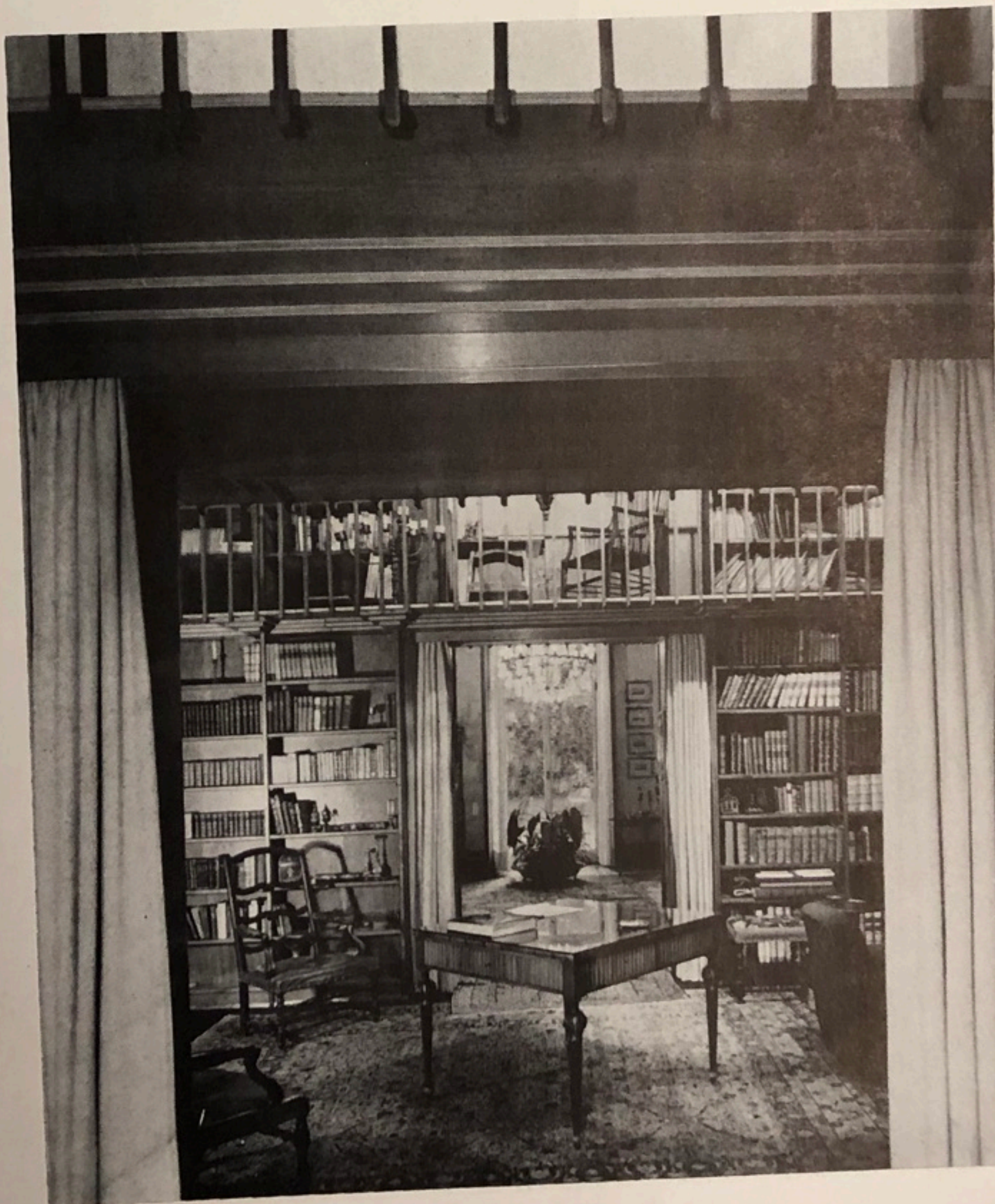


Opposite: Library is two stories high, located in the center of the house (piano in living room can be seen through doorway, to the left.) Bookshelves are built into all four walls of library; the mezzanine-gallery on second floor, which covers three sides of the room, houses additional shelves. The library synthesizes the leitmotifs of woodworking detail that characterize the interior: rectilinear carving of the ceiling under gallery, for example, is repeated in entrance hall (page 107); the beautiful detailing of posts and railing joints matches stairwell. Walnut is used throughout. Cynosure of the space is an antique brass filigree candelabra hung from the ceiling. Chairs have tapestry seats.



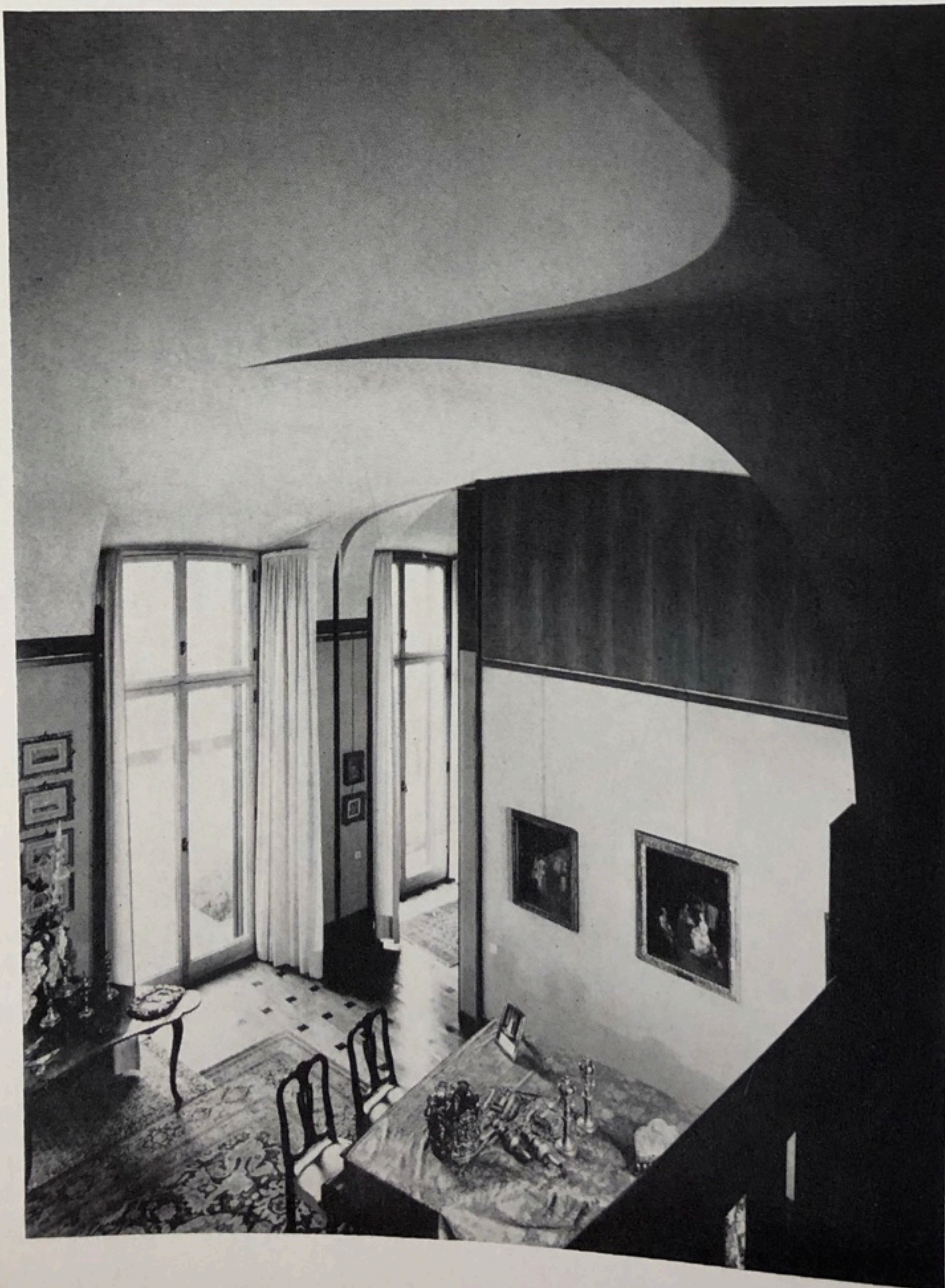
Above: At far wall of library stands a massive antique Ark of the Covenant, in which the Torah is housed. As glimpse of arched ceiling of the living room (overleaf) at right reveals, the gallery-mezzanine bridges the open passage between library and living room, giving further dimension to the baronial spaces.

Right: Design of the house allows a clear view from the entrance hall (page 107) through the library and living room to the garden. Spaces are unified by the repetition of white silk draperies, and woodworking details such as intricate post joints of stair and balcony railing, overlapping laminations of walnut on ceilings, floor edges and stair treads.



Below: Overhead view of the piano in one end of living room (see floor plan, page 106). Detail of ceiling, seen from balcony railing in foreground, shows articulate and graceful interplay of gentle arches and shadowed plane surfaces receding into arches. Note curves of ceiling over frame of French doors leading to garden. Walnut floor has inlaid blocks of ebony.

Opposite: Overall view of the living room, majestically scaled and opulently furnished, primarily with 18th and 19th century Italian antiques. Walls are covered in white silk; far wall, and cove above piano (below) are paneled in perfectly matched end walnut. Richly ornamental crystal chandeliers, Oriental rugs, predominantly in reds and blues, complement the furnishings.







Left and opposite: Wall of the fireplace in living room (see also pages 110-111) is paneled in perfectly matched end walnut; gently arched curve of paneling describes the ceiling shape. Fireplace outlined by bronze panels is recessed into wall, below simple, slab-like mantelpiece holding decorative figures. Massive loose-cushioned antique sofas, upholstered in bottle green velvet, are placed back to back diagonally across far end of room. Coffee table in front of fireplace is richly veined rose marble; small settee flanking table is covered in taupe velvet.



Left: A pair of French doors lead from the living room to the small private garden in back of the house. Light and view can be obscured, when required, by draperies of white silk on hinged rods that swing closed in front of doors. Wall surfaces, as shown here, are delineated by walnut posts and horizontal boards (from which paintings are hung, see opposite). Here the post detailing frames a delicately carved and inlaid antique secretary. The occasional chair, one of several throughout room, is upholstered in dark green velvet matching sofas; low table in foreground is rose veined marble, matching coffee table in front of fireplace.





Below: A small study off the large living room is furnished in similar fashion, with richly patterned Oriental rug, crystal chandelier, and antique furniture, all serving as sumptuous but subdued background for the art collection. Right: Dining room is of appropriately baronial proportions, furnished with heavy mahogany antique Italian furniture, cane-seated dining chairs. Walls, like fireplace wall in living room, are paneled in walnut with side walls covered in white silk. Paintings are hung from horizontal walnut stripping. Masterful detailing of the door frames is characteristic of superb woodworking throughout.



